

David Charles'

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JULY 14, 1967

SOX FIND BATTING EYES, RIP O's, 11-5

Yastrzemski Hits 20th Homer, Conigliaro 14th, Lonborg Logs 12th Victory

By Clif Keane, The Boston Globe

Jim Lonborg won his 12th game but the crowd of 27,787 hardly wanted to form a cavalcade and serenade the righthander back to his apartment Friday night from Fenway Park. Lonborg had leads of 8 to 0 and 11 to 5, and still help he had to be called from the bullpen.

The fans might have liked all the excitement, but Dick Williams didn't. He had his ace relief pitcher, John Wyatt, brought in during the recent inning and John had his usual ointment, or assortment, to get the Orioles out and the Red Sox won again, 11-5.

Baltimore tried a young man, Vic Anderson, a creaky arm, Wally Bunker and a tired arm, Stu Miller, on the mound while the Red Sox were smashing the ball all over the field and not until Jim Hardin came in was there any semblance of order.

The most exciting moments of the show came in the first inning when Tony Conigliaro, with his left forearm bandaged, hit a wicked homer over everything in leftfield off Anderson with a man on. There may be talk about the bandbox, but this homer would have gone out of Logan Airport.

And Carl Yastrzemski hit his 20th homer off Miller, who has now become a \$44,000 mopup pitcher, the most expensive cleanup guy in history. Carl really had to supply his own power in the sixth when he reached the Baltimore bullpen and now he has equalled his top homer production mark in his seven year of big league ball.

Adamson is a 19-year-old kid and he seemed to age four years before he was yanked in the second inning. He is only supposed to throw 100 pitches a game and he must have thrown almost that many before Bunker took over for him.

In the inning-and-two-thirds he worked, Adamson gave up five runs and Bunker was hardly an improvement when he handed out three in the fourth and Miller matched that three in the sixth. Hardin finally blanked the Red Sox in the seventh and eighth.

It looked as though Lonborg would have a very soft time for himself when he got through the first with only a base hit off him and retired 14 straight men. But in the sixth Jim gave up three runs on two singles and a triple by Brooks Robinson, with Robinson scoring on Regie Smith's wild throw to third base

trying to flag him down.

Williams came out during the inning and had a talk with a right hander and for a moment Lonborg looked like the Lonborg of all seasons. He hit a batter, Curt Motton, and probably everyone thought he had settled down.

But in the seventh a single and two doubles produced two more runs and with this 11-5 lead, Williams still brought in his star relief pitcher, Wyatt Robinson was at the plate and he struck out. The last pitch had a nice dip to it.

With the nice lead, Williams was able to rest Tony, Carl, Joe Foy and Rico Petrocelli. Rico thought he felt another twinge in his sore wrist after he had drilled a ball to leftfield in the sixth and Williams decided to take him out.

Those 11 runs by the Red Sox had the fans sounding sadistic in their joy.

Adamson warmed up in the bullpen and when he came out it looked as though the mound were something brand new to him. He walked Mike Andrews, who stole with two out and scored on Tony's 14th homer.

In the second, Rico walked and Reggie singled. Mike Ryan flew to the wall in leftfield for a run and Reggie got to second and Jim bunted home a run to help out a bit. Carl singled in another run after a bunt by Andrews and a walk to Foy.

Andrews singled in the fourth and Carl doubled to right. After Tony's grounder, Scott walked and Rico doubled to leftfield. The final three runs came in the sixth when Carl homered with one out, Tony walked and Scott, Rico and Reggie singled.

That should have been enough for Lonborg for a week to work on, but the Orioles really rattled their base hits off him in the sixth and one of the rare plays in baseball occurred during the inning.

Scott went to the area behind the Red Sox duout and reached up for a foul fly. The ball came down and George went down and it was ruled interference by the fans in the section.

It would have been nice to have happened in a World Series to end a game. Even organizer John Kiley got the urge along the way to play "Take Me Out to the Ball Game."

Boston Vintage Sports Flashback

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JULY 5, 1976

TIANT LEADS RED SOX TO .500 MARK, 11-2

Evane, Doyle Pace Attack

By Peter Gammons, The Boston Globe

This was the finale to the weekend Bicentennial activities, in harmony with "America the Beautiful," speeches at the Olde Granary and the Esplanade. Give the Red Sox (on their 10th try) the .500 mark or give them death; Good Lord, they are at .500.

Now the 37-37 record is the symbol of the eating house and ordinary in baseball. But after three months, 73 games, nine previous unsuccessful passes at the figurehead loft, it was as if Luis (10-5) Tiant and the Townines were Jason and the Argonauts and this was the olden Fleece. Through hydraheaded monsters, fire breathing bulls and legions of hostile legions they clawed. To .500.

They got there for the first time since April 29 with this 11-2 rout of the White Sox, a team that sometimes has to show its Players Assn. passes to get through the service gates. It was a game that the Fenway 24,640 fully realized was affected by both teams' post-2 a.m. arrivals. It was, however, appropriately for the Bicentennial game, begun by a man named Jefferson, whose teammates are named hamilton, johnson, johnson and Bradford.

While, after a Valley Forge of a split in Milwaukee over the weekend, signs of some revival ("Signs" said Dwight Evans, "that we're coming back"), this was some cause for holiday commemoration. It was a game the score of which is deceiving. OK, the Red Sox sprayed 11 hits over, under, around and through their Chicago cousins, but it was a game of merci beaucoup singles and a fifth inning that turned the entire July 5 around.

That fifth began, 1-1, El Tiente vs. Jesse Jefferson, and with two singles and a walk around a strikeout, Luis found himself in a matchup with Chester Lemon. the one-on-one duel came down to 3-and-2, with Tiant, who had ood heat all day, firing fastball after fastball (six straiht) on Lemon's fists until Chet finally rapped a grounder to Rick Burleson at short. from potential disaster, there was a double play, and from there the game turned around.

In the bottom half, into which Jefferson entered with a one-hitter, Rick Miller, as in designated hitter Rick Miller, dragged the perfect bunt. Evans, who along with Denny Doyle had three hits, lofted a drive to the corner in right. Buddy Bradford went after it, but between the run, the wall and the sun stopped; the ball dropped, and when he finished picking it up and overthrowing the cutoff man, Miller had scored, Evans was on third and it was 2-1. A Clell Hobson fly ball made it 3-1.

Game over. El Tiente with a lead is, perhaps, as tough as any pitcher there is, and you really had to watch was the top of the sixth, given that lead. Around a Jorge Orta wall double, El Tiente struck out the side with eight bows and a reverse twist. "He had the good fastball all day," said Carlton Fisk, boy anti-hero, "and, most important, he only walked one."

Luis gave up 11 hits, but most of them were pinball jobs - although in fairness there weren't 10 good hits between the two teams. He is the fifth pitcher in the American League to reach 10 victories, but darrell Johnson won't say whether he, Mark Fidrych, Frank Tanana or who will open next Tuesday's All-Star

game in Philadelphia.

It took a game that saw a double to the second baseman and the survival of a homer by Chicago's good looking rookie thid baseman, Kevin Bell, but it is the .500 mark. Teams in San Diego, Atlanta and Milwaukee are supposed to be celebrating such a pinnacle on July 5, but this is what the Bicentennial season has reduced the Red Sox, March's Lions, to considering satisfying.

And, in a weekend replete with the Esplanade and speeches at the Olde Granary, it couldn't have come against anyone more appropriate than one with 19th century uniforms and players named Jefferson, hamilton, Johnson, Johnson and Bradford.

JUNE 28, 1932

BOBBY BROWN TUCKS THE PHILLIES AWAY

Holds Them to Four Hits, Fanning Six as the Braves Take the Game by 5 to 2

By David F. Egan, The Boston Globe

Master Bobby Brown of Hull stuck the hard-hitting Phillies in his hip-pocket at Braves Field yesterday afternoon, and personally escorted the Braves to a 5-2 victory.

The young man with the blaze ball allowed the Phillies exactly four hits, one in the first and three in the fourth inning. He struck out six of the visiting varlets, and though he issued five free passes, they were tax-free and did not figure in the scoring.

In manufacturing his seventh victory of the season, the youngster did some high jinks on the mound. "Chuck" Klein and Don Hurst, two of the five leading hitters in the National League, failed to make a hit, though Klein boomed two tree-menjus flies to center that would have been home runs in almost any other park in the league. In the pinches, though, he was exactly what the doctor ordered. From the fourth on, two men reached first base on free transportation, but there they languished and died.

Errors Cost Runs

Had it not been for two errors the visitors would not have scored on Master Brown. The errors were commingled with three hits in the fourth inning and that was the only aplurge which the Philadelphians enjoyed throughout the long, drab matinee.

The Braves opened up on "Fidgety Phil" Collins in the opening inning when they manufactured a run pronto. Walter Maranville, the br'er rabbit, singled to second base and received the vote of the solid Massachusetts delegation. Urbanski sacrificed him with a pop bunt that landed near first base.

Bernie Friberg, a handy man to have around, scooped up the ball and retired Urbanski at first, but in an effort to catch Maranville at second his throw went into left field. Thus the Rabbit scampered to third and scored on "Red" Woerthington's single to left field.

Philadelphia went ahead in the fourth when our boys started hurling the ball around with more enthusiasm and accuracy. Whitney shot a one-baser to left field and Leo popped to shortstop. Vast Vergil (no relation to Little Caesar) Davis

smacked the ball to third baseman Ackers, and with a certain double play on the tips of his fingers he threw a high ball to Urbanski and Whitney was safe at second.

Make Up Lost Ground

Urbanski threw to first in an attempt to catch Davis, and Whitney sauntered toward third. The good Shires threw the ball toward the third base bleachers; Whitney scored and Davis plodded to third in his own heavyfooted manner. Friberg's fly to center scored Vast Vergil, and then Brown closed up shop for the day.

In the sixth and eighth he gave Hal Lee a base on balls, but that was the full extent of the Philly offensive. It was grand pitching by the youngster against one of the most dangerous teams in the National League, reading from left to right and top to bottom.

Our boys wasted little time in making up lost ground, for the stalwart young men came back in the last of the fourth and score three runs. With one out, Berger drew a base on balls and went to third when Shires sizzled a single to right field to atone for his previous error.

Akers, too, was in a contrite mood, and did penance for his earlier misdemeanor by slashing a double to right center field. The ball skipped through the legs of Klein, and when the play was over Akers was hugging himself on third base and both Berger and Shires had scored. Akers was released from durance vile on Brown's single to left field. Little children laughed, birds twittered and the June sun smiled a benediction on the Braves.

Berly Appears

Collins was given the well-known hook in the fifth and John Berly stepped into the picture, to do some fine pitching for the rest of the game. He is the laddie-buck whom the Giants sent to Indianapolis, and the Phollish Phils recently purchased. His sweeping curves kept the Braves under control until the seventh, and now we shall hear the seventh, and now we shall hear about Walter J. Maranville, Esq.

The old veteran sounded the tocsin with a double to center to introduce the inninbg. He slid safely into third on Urbanski's sacrifice, when Berly tried to head him off, and both runners were safe.

This brought almost something that resembled a Democratic convention in the center of the diamond. Davis scratched his head and pondered the situation. Berly mused deeply. Capt. "Pinky" Whitney went into a blue study. Shortstop Dick bartell could not quite figure it out. And one and all forgot about home plate.

Rabbit Steals Home

The "Rabbit" noticed that the plate was unguarded, and made a dash for liberty. Davis scuttled to the plate, and Berly threw the ball, which landed near the home base with a thull and thickening sud - I mean sull and thickening dod - or, I should say, a dull and sickening thud just as Maranville scooted over the plate. A spry, smart old geezer, the Rabbit.

That concludes the braoadcast from Station E-G-A-N for today. And now we will listen to Big Sister Emeryboard, who will tell bedtime stories.

JULY 27, 1943

BRAVES CAN BEAT REDS

Tobin Stops 'Em, 6 to 2, With Walters Proving Soft Mark

By Melville Webb, The Boston Globe

CINCINNATI - Following their vicissitudes in St. Louis the Braves came over to redland today to find a team they can beat. It was 6 to 2 against the Reds behind Jim Tobin's soft ball flinging.

The Tribe won its seventh victory in 10 starts over Bill McKechnie's also disconsolate crew, and looked better than at any other time on the present tour while doing the job. the tourists never were headed although twice their one-one lead was broken.

But going ahead 3 to 2 in the seventh inning, the Braves soon thereafter connected beautifully against the offerings of "Bucky" Walters.

Plenty of Heat

St. Louis has nothing on Old Cincinnati for heat; but the tribe thrived and was considerably more awake than for some time.

Tobin got himself into only one bad spot all afternoon. That was when he passed two hitters in succession to force Steve Mesner across the plate in the sixth inning for the McKechnies' second and last run.

Then with the bases still filled, lonnie frey hit to Eddie Joost, who nipped Eric Tipton at the plate, and Milo Marshall accommodatigly boosted a fly out to "Butch" Nieman in left field.

The Braves made 10 hits while it was only seven for the home club. maybe the shifted lineup did the business. Manager Stengel installed lanky "Heinie" Weltzel, from Hartford, at third base and kept Kirby Farrell at first base. Weltzel handled himself nicely, regardless of having the ball kicked out of his hands by Eddie Miller, who slid into third base in the fourth inning.

Lobs Them Up

"Heinie" earned the right for longer tryout at the hot corner. Tobin simply lobbed 'em up all day. In fact, his fastest pitch was made in the eighth stanza when he ticketed Ray Mueller intentionally just before going off control against Buck Walters, who did not have much all day with all except one of the Tribes' 10 hits being made against his delivery.

The Braves run-story was easy. In the second inning, farrell got a "life" on a boot by Mesner, took third on the first of Phil Masi's three singles, and counted on a fly by Wietelmann. In the fifth, masi made the rounds on a single, Wietelmann's sacrifice, and a hit by Tobin.

The game was put away in the seventh on hits by Masi and Weitelmann and a long boost by Tobin, and at the finish, three Tribal counters were easy because of an error by Lonnie Frey, hits by Workman and Wietelmann and a pair of passes.

OCTOBER 13, 1929

BULLDOGS WIN, 41-0. BEFORE 1000 FANS

**Stockton, Wentworth and Kittridge Stand
Out**

By Ford Sawyer, The Boston Globe

The Boston Bulldogs signalized their homecoming at Braves Field yesterday by running rough-shod over the visiting Dayton Triangles, 41-0, in a National Professional Football League game before about 1000 spectators.

The Boston boys outplayed their opponents in every respect, but their aerial attack was particularly brilliant forward passes playing an important part in three of the home boys' scores.

Houston Stockton, ex-Gonzaga boy, was accurate as a sharpshooter, while Cy Wentworth and Pete Merloni were usually on the spot to nail the aerial shots.

Cy Wentworth, ex-New Hampshire back, made several thrilling runs, once covering 50 yards for a touchdown after catching a punt.

Paul Kittridge, entering the game in the closing period, pulled down two Dayton passes, once traveling 45 yards to score, and on the other occasion taking the ball down almost to the enemy's final white marker.

Bulldogs Show Teeth

The first period was scoreless, but early in the second the Bulldogs countered. Boston had the ball on Dayton's 35-yard line, when Cy Wentworth tossed a forward pass to Pete Merloni, who penetrated to the enemy's 10-yard line. Successive line smashes by Latone and Wentworth followed, with the latter going over and kicking the goal.

A few minutes later, Houston Stockton intercepted a forward pass by Buchanan, visiting quarterback, at midfield and ran it back to the Dayton 27-yard line. Cy Wentworth took a pass from Stockton, and added by some splendid interference, added the second touchdown. He kicked goal.

With the start of the third period the Bulldogs lost little time in increasing their advantage. Boston took the ball on downs on Dayton's 48-yard line. After a short gain Stockton heaved a pass to Wentworth who distanced his rivals, and scored again. Wentworth kicked the goal.

The final period was a nightmare for Dayton. Early in the period, Dayton, back on its own seven-yard line, resorted to a kick. Buchanan punted out to Wentworth, who, with his interferers handily paving the way, ran from midfield to the Dayton goal for another score. His try for goal failed.

Paul Kittridge Flashes

Paul Kittridge replaced Stockton in the fourth period, and soon made his presence felt, as he caught a Dayton forward pass on the visitors' 45-yard line and ran the ball back to the eight-yard stripe. Lawrence and Latone smashed along to the one-yard line and Latone went over. Wentworth added the point.

A few minutes later Kittridge caught another aerial thrust on

his own 45-yard line and went all the way to a touchdown to bring the score to 41-0. The Alhambra band played at this game.

OCTOBER 1, 1972

REDSKINS GAMBLE TO PATs' DELIGHT, 24-23

By Will McDonough, The Boston Globe

FOXBORO - This is the Patriots' new pattern of winning. They fall behind by 14 points early in the game, come roaring back to take the lead and then watch Lady Luck squelch the opponent in the end.

It was that way again yesterday afternoon at Schaefer Stadium when a capacity crowd of 60,999 nearly flipped watching the Patriots put together an amazing 24-23 upset of the classy Washington Redskins.

The game was a thriller with an iconic twist as Washington, hungry for a victory, dismissed a chance for a tie and then muffed three chances to take it in the final two minutes.

Those final 108 seconds were really something. With the Pats leading, 24-21, Curt Knight kicked a 33-yard field goal to even it up, 24-24. But wait a minute. There was a penalty on the Patriots and the Redskins accepted it for a first down.

"We didn't take the field goal," said Redskins coach George Allen, "because we wanted a victory. We still had the ball back to go for a touchdown. At word, we expected another field goal."

But, with 1:22 left to play, Knight missed a "gimmie" from the 27 - shades of Atlanta kicker Bill Bell when he blew a 10-yard field goal in the final seconds to let the Patriots slide by the falcons last week, 21-20.

Yet, the 'Skins weren't dead. With 57 seconds left, kicker Pat Studstill had his punt blocked at the Patriots' 10 by Bill Malinchak. The ball zoomed off Malinchak's hand and skidded along the grass toward the back of the end zone. Malinchak, needing possession for a touchdown just missed by inches as the ball rolled back out of bounds and it was called a safety.

"I had a touchdown," insisted Malinchak later. "I had the ball before it went out of bounds." The referees ruled otherwise. Instead of having a touchdown and six points, Washington had a safety and only two points.

So the Patriots led, 24-23, and had to kick to Washington. The Redskins moved it into position for a 50-yard field goal attempt with 10 seconds to play. But again Knight was wide to the right. "He missed it by a foot at most," said Ricky Harris. "It just sailed wide of the goal post."

Despite the tribulations of the Redskins, the Patriots played outstanding football and deserved to win. Jim Plunkett, throwing two touchdowns and picking apart a tough Washington defense for 380 total yards, was magnificent. It was probably Plunkett's best game as a Patriot as he connected on 17 of 33 passes for 255 yards and two touchdowns.

Offensively, rookie running back Josh Ashton gave Plunkett all the help he needed. With Ashton lugging the ball for 113 yards in the absence of the injured Carl Garrett, Plunkett was able to keep Washington guessing all day.

Defensively, the Patriots hustled. Billy Kilmer beat them with three touchdown passes, but could never get far enough ahead.

The Redskins took a 14-0 lead with two touchdowns in the first five minutes of the second period. At 2:10, Kilmer floated a 30-yard scoring strike to Charlie Taylor. Two minutes later, after a Patriot fumble deep in their own end, Kilmer hit Taylor with a quick four-yard scoring shot.

Before the half, the Pats got a touchdown back on a long march the culminated with Ashton slashing over from the two.

In the third period, Plunkett started picking the Washington zone apart, and moved for another score - this one an 11-yard pass to Reggie Rucker.

The Patriots finally got the lead, 17-14, late in the third period when Charlie Gogolak - a last minute replacement for the injured Mike "Superfoot" Walker - slammed a 42-yard field goal.

The Redskins, though, came firing back with a long drive which ended with Kilmer finding Jerry Smith in the right corner with a nine-yard touchdown pass.

With ten minutes to play, Plunkett showed once again that he is a terrific fourth-period quarterback as he started ripping away at the 'Skins' secondary. The winning TD strike was a beauty, as Plunkett ran away from his pursuers and rifled a 31-yard scoring bullet to Ashton, who was camped on the goal line.

This made it, 24-21, and Washington would get its chances.

"We did everything but win," said Charey Taylor. "It was there for us to win and we didn't."

FEBRUARY 14, 1928

FREDERICKSON'S LATE GOAL WINS FOR BRUINS

Victory Over Blackhawks, 1-0, Puts Boston In Top Tie

By John J. Hallahan, The Boston Globe

The Bruins jumped into a tie with the New York Rangers at the top of the American division of the National Hockey League last night, when they defeated the Chicago Blackhawks, 1 to 0, at the Arena. The only score came in the last six minutes of play in the third period, Frederickson to Oliver to Frederickson, completing a play that enabled the last named to beat Gardiner, the Blackhawks' goalie, with a close-in shot at the mouth of the cage.

It was the last game the Blackhawks will play this season in this city, and while the Bruins won, there was nothing to be exultant over in their work, for if they had played with their accustomed aggressiveness they would undoubtedly have made a record score. They missed innumerable chances and for the Bruins, Eddie Shore and Percy Galbraith were the only ones to show at all brilliantly.

As for the game, it was a loosely played affair. The Blackhawks won a 3 to 0 over the Rangers Sunday night, but there was very little in their style of play last night to indicate that they are that much better than the team which is tied with the Bruins in the American division. The Windy City sextet had few opportunities to score, although Hitchman and Shore were

employing loose defensive tactics.

Oliver's Shots Wild

During the first 20 minutes of action the Bruins were continually threatening, but could not get the rubber home, missing many chances, and of these Harry Oliver, a more or less dependable player, lost no less than half a dozen, either missing the cage altogether or driving right at the goalie. Dutch Gainor tried hard, but he was no better than Oliver, Galbraith, showing more aggressiveness than the others, could not tear loose with a drive. As for the Blackhawks they played for the breaks that never came and their defensive style did not make the game very interesting as compared with past contests which they have played in Boston.

In the second period the Bruins charged and the greater part of the first 10 minutes the Blackhawks were one man shy because of penalties. The locals bore down on the Chicago fort, but Gardiner was able to thwart the attack when the outer pair was not picking the rubber away from the Bruins. Arbour, who was very aggressive for Chicago, got inside of the defense early, but he failed to beat Hal Winkler, as did McKay, who fooled the Boston defense later.

Henry Connor was having difficulty hitting the target, his shots landing against the side of the net. He was relieved by Hago Harrington, who was no better. Three times Hago hit the side of the cage. Oliver's tough luck of the first period carried on and there was no scoring. Duke Keats, the Blackhawks' center man, had two visits to the "cooler" in this period for roughness.

Bruins Meet Rangers Sunday

The game went into the third period, but Chicago continued its defensive style and the Bruins began to bear down, but it was not until 14 minutes 35 seconds had elapsed that the disc landed in the net. Frederickson picked up the rubber near the middle line. He worked with Oliver, and the latter, after carrying down the right side, passed to Frederickson, and the Iclander whipped the rubber by Gardiner.

After the score, the Bruins continued to bang away, but "Lady Luck" did not smile on their efforts, and the Bruins managed to win by one lone goal. That was sufficient as the victory has placed them in a tie with the Rangers, and adds interest to the game that will be staged by the two top teams next Sunday at New York.

FEBRUARY 25, 1990

CELTICS ON A ROLL

Road Trip Ends in Victory

By Jackie MacMullan, The Boston Globe

DENVER - The road trip is suddenly a success. The rookie, doubted by all, has busted loose, and the 12th man, who was never expected to contribute, is now the point guard when the game is on the line.

Welcome to the new version of the Boston Celtics, who beat the Denver Nuggets, 115-107, yesterday behind a career-high 24 points from Michael Smith and 12 points and seven assists from

Charles Smith.

Oh, the kids needed help, of course, and they got it from Larry Bird (25 points, 17 rebounds) and Kevin McHale (17 points, 9 rebounds). But if you are really searching for the MVP of this grueling trip, which ended with Boston at 4-4, then consider coach Jimmie Rodgers.

It was Rodgers who took a look at the club's four-game slide and decided to shake things up. Thus, he made Michael Smith a starter, relegating former front men Ed Pinckney to the bench. He made Charles Smith, not John Bagley, the first point guard off the pine, and gave the rookie from Georgetown the reins, not veteran Dennis Johnson, when the game was on the line.

In between, he settled on Jim Paxson as his backup shooting guard and used McHale as both a power forward and center.

Rodgers has not committed to that rotation for the rest of the season, but he did commit to it for two games - against Golden State and Denver - and squeezed out two Ws as a result.

"[The two Smiths] are two guys that have been developing right along," said Rodgers. "We've had them in mind, but it takes responsibility, it takes maturity, and it takes confidence to contribute. We felt the time was right for them."

"It's an excellent feeling to throw different lineups at teams," said McHale. "All of a sudden we're a team with a few different looks."

That different look befuddled Denver early, before the Nuggets hunkered down defensively in the third quarter and fought their way back into the game. But with Michael Adams (strained hamstring) and Walter Davis (inflamed knee) out of action, they had trouble knocking down jumpers (45.8 percent for the game) - as well as free throws (11 for 17 in the second half) - when it mattered.

In spite of being shorthanded, the Nuggets still managed to take the game to the wire, even after they fell behind, 51-36, in the second quarter.

They did so with relentless defensive pressure during a 15-2 run in the third quarter, when they forced Boston into missing six straight jumpers and turning the ball over three times. During that same stretch, Fat Lever (18 points, 12 rebounds, 12 assists) took control offensively.

Bird finally put a halt to the frenzied comeback by just beating the shot clock with a big jumper, but his club had gone 5:38 without a field goal, and Denver led, 89-87, entering the final quarter.

"I thought," said Leer, "that we might have turned it around then."

Not exactly. Charles Smith, who had checked in for DJ with 7:16 to go in the third, stayed on the floor for the duration to pester on defense and push the ball.

The other Smith joined soon after, in the midst of a 7-2 Denver run capped by a free throw from Danny Schayes (20) and a 102-96 Nuggets lead with 5:27 to play.

Within seconds, Michael took a feed from Charles and swished it. Tim Kempton missed on the other end, then Bird drained a long fallaway. After that, Michael hauled down a big offensive rebound and dished it to Charles underneath. That tied the game, 102-102.

Alex English (26) contended with a big 3-point play on the baseline (Michael Smith still has a ways to go defensively), but that barely slowed the Celtics, who used another tough turnaround from Michael, a free throw from Charles and a pair of freebies from Reggie Lewis to grab the lead, 107-105, with 2:22 showing.

Joe Barry Carroll stepped to the line with a chance to tie at 2:10, but missed both.

That led to the killer bucket from Bird, a 3-point dagger with 1:18 on the clock that finished Denver. The run was 14-3, the cushion was 110-105 Boston, and the smiles came from the Celtics bench.

"It's been a long 18 days," said a somber Bird. "We played some good ball and some bad ball. This was a nice way to end it."

The ending was made possible by shooting 63.6 percent at halftime (52.5 for the game), including hitting 12 of the first 13 jumpers in the second quarter. The 67-56 advantage at the break was generated with the kind of enthusiasm and hustle that has been missing at times from Boston during this long season.

Yet not everyone was leaping aboard the team's "new look" bandwagon."

When asked if he thought the change in personnel could continue to produce wins, Bird answered, "I don't know. If we don't win the championship, then it's a waste of a season."